November 3, 2001

I: Good morning, Rollin. I am Dorothe Norton and I am here to conduct an interview on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, so we'll start with you giving me your birth place and date.

N: I was born October 8, 1942 in Watertown, South Dakota.

I: O.K., can you give me your parent's names?

N: Ah, Paul and Evelyn Siegfried, and my father was a farmer and my mother was a housewife until after they left the farm.

I: O.K. What were their jobs and education? Your parents?

N: Well, they both worked in Agriculture, and they both of them are high school graduates. As a matter of fact, my mother went to high school at 16 years of age, and she graduated.

I: Oh. O.K. And, uh, where did you spend your early years?

N: Working – on agriculture, on my father's farm.

I: O.K. How did you spend your early years?

N: Working – I was running tractors, equipment, taking care of livestock, etc. We had horses, dogs, cats on the farm, too

I: What hobbies, books or events influenced you most?

N: Uh, I guess the biggest thing was that I, ah, well, hunting and fishing were my biggest hobbies and the one thing that was unique about it was that my mother took me fishing every year, the first day in May and some times, a lot of times, that was when I was in school, and she'd take me out of school for the day and we'd go fishing. And I also remember when I was growing up and I was about, uh, when we were cultivating corn which was about the first part of June, I remember I would visit my grandmother on my father's side, and he would have me stand apart and recite all of the wildlife I had seen that week.

I: O.K. What jobs did you have as a child?

N: Working on my father's farm. Then, of course, occasionally we would go out and help neighbors but that was usually on a we help them, they'd help us type plan, I would say.

I: Did you hunt or fish?

N: Yes we did. I was just adding a 20 gauge single shot, and a single shot .22, when I was 8 or 10, I remember that, as a matter of fact it was almost before we had hunter safety, and I did take hunter safety two years later, but we used to go out and I'd hunt pheasants, ducks, rabbits, and those kind of things.

I: Good. Now can you tell me what high school you went to and where it was?

N: I went to Goodwin, South Dakota high school. We had 9 in our graduating class – I graduated in 1960 and there were 5 boys and 4 girls.

I: When did you graduate? In 1960?

N: That is correct.

I: And what University did you attend, when, and what degree?

N: I went to the South Dakota State University at Brookings, S.D. – a B.S. degree in Wildlife Conservation – a professional course -- there were two courses, one of them was for Agriculture and the other one was for a professional course.

I: And you didn't get a Master's Degree?

N: No, I did not.

I: What aspect of your formal education equipped you for the future?

N: I'm going to give you the knowledge of who to contact in case you ran into some problems that you needed the answer for wildlife purposes. Basically mostly working my career with people and people issues.

I: . O.K. And who most influenced your education and career track?

N: I'd say my mother.

I: O.K. And did you have any mentors, or courses that especially stuck with you?

N: No, well, I had a couple of instructors that I sort of thought were pretty good – I enjoyed two of the classes – I enjoyed most in school – we studied Enderology (?) – we studied trees, and Physics – I don't know why, but I got best grades in those, but for whatever reason . . .

I: Were there adverse influences?

N: Yeah - Incompetent instructors that never been out in the field.

I: Let's talk about military service. Were you in a branch of the Armed Services?

N: I was in the Reserve, mainly, Air Force Reserve. While I was going to school, I'd learned how to fly, got my pilot's license, so then I took the entrance exam for the Navy Flying Program and I passed that but they didn't need any Navy flyers at the time, and when they did need Navy flyers, I was already out of school and working for the State of Wisconsin and they had sort of found a spot for me at the time to sort of save me from being drafted or going into some other Service and I was in the Air Force Reserve, which, I had a background in Entomology so that was my specialty code - it was Entomology for the Air Force Reserve which therefore carried over to the Guard – Air National Guard – I was in the combination , the Guard Reserve, for probably 25 years before I retired out of there.

I: Did the military service relate in any way to your employment with the Service.

N: Oh, yeah, I ah had Entomology, obviously, so basically any time I worked in the recent past, it was ah, purple loofestrife and aphid and needle introductions.

I: O.K. And your spouse – her name is

N: Karen Siegfried.

I: Karen Siegfried. When and where and how did you meet?

N: Well, I think I met her in about 1988 in the Regional Office and she currently works for the Fish & Wildlife Service in the Realty Division.

I: And when and where did you marry?

N: Well we married June er, January 5th in 1991.

I: Good, and where, in Fergus Falls?

N: Fergus Falls.

I: Do you have any children in your marriage.

N: Uh, two children in my previous marriage – my son is, ah, works as a policeman for the City of St. Paul, Minnesota, and my daughter works for the medical clinic in Fergus Falls, and I have two grandsons.

I: O.K. Why did you ever want to work for the Service?

N: The only thing was, I worked for the DNR, the Wisconsin DNR, and this came up and it was an opportunity for a permanent job, which I thought was a permanent job, which actually turned out to be temporary, but anyway I took that job – Squaw Creek NWR in Missouri – Mound City, Missouri.

I: You were working first for the State of Wisconsin?

N: Yes, for the State of Wisconsin – I worked for the Game Warden special.

I: And what did you do there?

N: I worked to enforce game and fish laws.

I: And from there you went to Squaw Creek?

N: That's correct. Assistant Manager (??)

I: And where did you go from Squaw Creek?

N: Ah, Squaw Creek, then I went to Tamarac as Assistant Manager with emphasis on wetlands – they were Wetlands Management District which encompassed about 4 or 5 counties in northwestern Minnesota. Then I went on to be in charge of Detroit Lakes Wetlands Management District, which strictly was working with wetlands, and then I went out to Pierre, South Dakota and became Realty Officer and covered the States of Nebraska, Kansas and South Dakota, and then back to Fergus - I had to close the Area Office and then I went back to Fergus and became Wetland Manager following retirement of Marvin Mansfield, and from there I went to the Complex Manager, and then up to the Special Assistant to the Regional Director for Eco-Systems.

I: What attracted you to the Service?

N: Permanent job at the time.

I: Pardon me,

N: Permanent job because I didn't have a permanent job in the State of Wisconsin.

I: And what were the pay and benefits like?

N: Poor. Benefits were good, but the pay was – you made $5700 a year and that was in 1968.

I: Were there promotion opportunities?

N: Oh yeah, if you wanted to move, you know, there were opportunities – there was no problem there.

I: O.K. And did you socialize with the people you worked with?

N: Well, one other thing on that, uh, as far as promotions – back then you could take a promotion because you had some place to live, you didn't have to worry about selling a house, buying a house, you lived in Refuge housing as you went around and that was done away with in subsequent years. What is the next question?

I: Did you socialize with the people you worked with?

N: Oh yeah, we did, especially when I was in the Area Office up there because we worked everybody every day and it was a quote unquote, the buzz back there was keep involved in Quality Management – we used to get together with everybody – we'd have fishing contests, we'd go out hunting together. As I moved up in my career and things changed, wives worked, husbands baby sat, etc., etc., it got difficult, more difficult, and basically you rarely went out and did things with people in your own profession, you dealt with people outside of your profession.

I: How did your career affect your family?

N: No, I don't think it really affected the family in any indirect way, direct ways I suppose. We, uh, continued hunting, fishing and camping and doing outdoor things.

I: Why did you leave the Service?

N: Retired.

I: O.K. What kinds of training did you receive for your jobs?

N: Oh, there was all sorts of training out there, it was just a matter if you had time to take it – that was the biggest thing – uh, there was all sorts of opportunity, so I think training was a plus working for the Service – anywhere from computer training on down.

I: What hours did you work?

N: Huh! In the field I used to work many, many hours and its not appearing like today where people think 8 to 5 is all you got to put in -- we used to put in extra hours, just because we were dedicated, or we thought we were more dedicated – maybe we were just slower, I don't know.

I: What were your day to day duties.

N: Oh, when I first started it was mainly Refuge Operations/Management – and finally Wetlands – Wetlands, it was basically – that's where I think my calling was in the Wetland Program because born and raised in the Prairie-Kocal area, and so it was a matter of preserving, protecting, and enhancing, and uh acquiring wetlands, that was about it there. Then, I went to the Area Office and I was the Realty Officer there and I did the acquisition and preservation of wetlands in the Dakotas, South Dakota and Nebraska, and Kansas.

I: Oh, I see. Did you witness any new Service inventions or innovations?

N: Oh, there's a lot of things that were started and stopped. The TCM was a good program – a lot of the good managers were always doing it and it just involved your whole staff if you wanted to – and then the Eco-System Management was just a matter of people working together, stretch your dollars, and a lot of good managers had done that in the past, and those were the two innovative things that came up, and they were Service initiatives, but they were actually carried out by the people who worked for the Service.

I: Did you use any special tools or instruments in doing your job?

N: No – just a good line of b.s. Ha Ha.

I: Did you work at all with animals?

N: Oh yeah, I mean, basically the waterfowl management that's basically what I always did, but then when we got an Eco-System there was good management of all wildlife species – cross Service boundaries, good law enforcement, fisheries, birds, non-game birds, game birds, whooping cranes, endangered species, all sorts of things.

I: How did you feel towards the animals?

N: Great – we helped them out.

I: That's good. Did this change over time?

N: Oh yeah – I mean, you know, the whooping crane was recently re-introduced, uh, where they have gone from very few to a few more – I wouldn't say a lot – but now that they've got a free-flying flock that's trying to establish a flock in Wisconsin and have it over winter and in Florida and I think that's going to be successful and I think the combined Service "State" and private sector, working together.

I: What support did you receive locally, regionally, federally? From the people that lived in the area?

N: Well, when I first went to work for the Service, I got very little support from the Service, basically, because they consider wetlands, uh, sort of an orphan program – and they were supposed to be under Refuges, but Refuges basically managed the property and the boundaries – wetlands were uh. the thought was if you had just acquired it and you see your easement would stay there forever and that was only true because as soon as we acquired it there was always some violation followed by subjects and we had to go out and do something about that but basically got very little support from the a lot of the people in the "higher echelon" of the Service. Basically because none of them associate with the wetland program.

I: I see. O.K. How do you think the Service is perceived by people outside the Agency?

N: Well, I think that outside the Service – I think a lot of people expect us to do more – be more of a leader – sometimes we did, sometimes we didn't – and you know, we had, then after a while, we got to the point, I should say we got smarter, but we got to be more cooperative with the outside world and build partnerships – and to me that's the way you make things work, really, the partnerships with the private sector, the State, private organizations, and all that kind of stuff.

I: So Agency-community relations were . . .

N: They were sort of poor to start with, and they got better as the people in the field got more involved and it seemed to me that a lot of the people who worked for the Service were introverts and they didn't have a lot of community involvement. When I first started with the Service, uh, after I made my first move, I ran for the school board, and I think I went through it six years and I got to see where the tax money was spent, where it was going, who were the innovative type people in the community, etc., etc.

I: What projects are you involved in?

N: Basically, the wetland program – that's my primary project. Basically we like say preserve, manage the wetlands after we acquire them, and also restore them, and I suppose the last two or three projects would be the Camden Slough NWR and the Rydell NWR – they're pretty unique because Camden Slough was used, the Mallard model, was used to establish the boundaries, because it's done on the typical "this is the road here, we'll follow this road , then we'll take that road, we can do that," and the Rydell Refuge was a combination of fisheries, and used as a part of it, to raise walleyes for the Service, and it was acquired by the Mallard Foundation who instructed them to turn it over to the FWS to manage. In other words, no doubt it came out of the Service pockets to acquire it. We got total boundaries and there was no round-out left to buy, there was no existing wetlands left to buy and it was, uh we just acquired it all.

I: O.K. What were the major issues you had to deal with?

N: Ah, basic law enforcement, refuge issues, wetland issues, because there was always some violation. It included not only the Law Enforcement Agents, the Solicitor's office, and all the U.S. Attorneys.

I: Oh. How were those issues resolved then?

N: Well, hopefully not by court action. We would just go back and try to persuade the violator to correct the issue and if they didn't, then we just cited them into court to do it, and it took a reasonably long time because 99% of our stuff went through several, and not criminal court.

I: What was your most pressing issue?

N: I would say the wetlands issue was probably the most pressing issue because we were losing wetlands faster than we were gaining them. In other words they were being drained at a rate not only by farmers and agriculturists, but also by developers and highway construction —we had one highway take out 57 wetlands, and basically, uh, at the direction of the landowner, uh, the contractor went along and did it. We also had a situation where the State had lowered a bunch of culverts at the request of adjacent landowners and even though they were using Federal Aid, we had them go back and raise a certain number, but there were hundreds, thousands, culverts that were lowered illegally – never had been verified or checked.

I: Has your perspective or opinion on that issue changed with time?

N: Well, I think more people are aware of it, that's what it is – I think more people are concerned about it because they think the world is shrinking with the use of computers and communications.

I: What was the major impediment to your job? To your career?

N: Ha - Incompetent people that I worked with – uh, some of them. I mean, just like instructors, there were people that were there for whatever various reasons and they weren't always the best people for the job and it was frustrating sometimes to try and get something done and you had to work through some of these people and I don't think that's unique, but it just seems to be a pain in the uh, you know where.

I: Who were your supervisors?

N: Oh, let me see, I had probably the best – I can just think of the first few I had when I worked for the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries – one of the better ones I had was a guy by the name of Chuck Strickland, who worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service after that, after we left the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. Then I worked for Chuck Sauers who was in the Area Office, and he didn't have a fish background, but he was into all sorts of things, birds, etc. etc. Worked for Norral Wallace – he was the Complex Manager at Fergus for a while, and then he retired. Then I suppose, the last few years, the people I worked with, I probably got the most support from John Christian and Marv Moriarity in the Regional Office.

I: Who were the individuals who shaped your career?

N: I would say, uh, probably a guy who worked for the DNR at the time, a guy by the name of Morris Patterson probably very few people know him – he was a son-in-law, uh, to, uh – in the wetlands program in the State of Minnesota in 1952, I'll have to think of his name here - but anyway he's probably the one that influenced my wetlands background, more enhanced it, more because of his knowledge of wetlands, also the amount of time that he read and things like that – Dorr was his name – Dick Dorr – was the guy's name that started the wetlands program in the State of Minnesota.

I: Who were some of the people you knew?

N: I'd say that Morris Pattterson is one of them. There's a number of people basically, but most of them are little people that you probably would never know. Basically they're people that were always trying to help wildlife, directly or indirectly. Early in my career, it was always indirectly because we'd always get calls at night, or at the office, or some people would want to sell their land – they wouldn't park in the yard, they'd park behind the garage and stuff like that.

I: I see. Do you think they'd be able to work for the FWS today?

N: Sure, matter of fact, we had some of the people when we established the Camden Slough NWR, one of the guys that claimed he'd never work for the FWS, he wouldn't sell his land to FWS, hoped none of his kids working for the FWS – now today, he's wearing the uniform working for the FWS.

I: What Presidents, Secretaries of Interior, and Director of FWS did you serve under? Do you remember them?

N: No, I don't remember them all. I remember the good ones. The Director I remember the most, and probably admired the most, was Lynn Greenwalt. Regional Director – probably the most active one was Jim Gritman – in the wetlands area, anyway, because he liked wetlands.

I: Do you remember any of the Secretarys of the Interior?

N: Well the only one I can remember is Morris Udall because he'd been around for a long time and for several administrations – I don't know if he was good or bad, but he was around for a long time!

I: Did changes in administrations affect your work?

N: Not really, but basically because every body came in and had their new ideas of how the programs should be run., Basically, but it's the bureaucrats that keep the whole thing rolling in the right direction.

I: Who were the individuals who shaped the Service?

N: Oh people like Lynn Greenwalt – I would say in a broad sense, he worked over Refuges. I would say people like Chuck Sauers – who went across Program lines to, you know, from Fisheries to Refuges, to Law Enforcement – I think people like Morris Patterson, who worked for the Minnesota DNR and who went across Agency lines – and there were numerous people like that. Anybody that I thought was good, and would go out and be assertive, and work with other Agencies, not only the people that would work with Ducks Unlimited, or private hunting clubs, or sportsmen's clubs, or things like that, you know.

I: What was the high point of your career?

N: Oh, I figure the high point of my career was the last few years – well, shouldn't say that – I think there were two high points – one of the high points was working with the current wetlands management districts in western Minnesota – there was 5 of them, including one Refuge. Basically we came up with a computer program that put all of this "information" transfer is called Resource Interim Planning Card – it was a paper card that was established in 1965. We had that put on the computer through my efforts and some efforts of some of the Morris student computer operators and I think the second thing was the eco-system effort that was put on the last couple of years because of going across program lines, we didn't have this "you're them" and "we're us" and all that kind of stuff - we had people who were from Fisheries, from Law Enforcement , ES, all that kind of good stuff and that wasn't heard of when I first started with the Service, you didn't know who Fisheries was, you didn't know who Federal Aid was, you didn't know who Eco-System was, you didn't know Law Enforcement – the guys would show up in the fall, and you'd never see them again.

I: What was the low point of your career?

N: Low point? The low point was some of the incompetent people that you had to put up with, that you had to work with – I didn't have the vaguest idea of how some of these people get there, you know, you wonder how they got where they're at.

I: What do you wish you had done differently?

N: Oh, I don't know, I'd sort of like to know exactly what I did. The only thing I would do differently is that there were some people that I should have – they were incompetent, and I should have said something to their supervisor not to them, because obviously they're not going to change – I should have went right to the Regional Director at the time, you know.

I: What was your most dangerous or frightening experience?

N: One time when I was on a wetland district, I got a call from the sheriff who said there were a bunch of motorcyclists on our WPA, so I went out there and it looked like the Norwegian Hell's Angels were out there, so I went in there, and I had a brand new, not brand new, '54 Chevrolet pick-up that we stored, drove into the area, and this guy said we got a permit from a ranger to be here, and I said what's the ranger's name and he didn't know. I asked if he had a copy of the permit, and he didn't have it. And I said, "well, I'm the ranger, and you don't have one." Well, that one didn't go over so good. So, anyway, he went off and wanted to buy me a drink, and I said "No" – well then a guy came out of the boondocks and had a big stick and beat on my truck and I told him not to do that, So he ordered two guys just to beat the snot out of these guys, and then they dragged them around thru the poison ivy with no shirt on. Then he says "You can have any of these women you want here" and I said "No, can't do that either" so then I called a Federal Agent , and I asked him "What are we going to do about that?" and he said "Do you have any face masks, any mace, " and I answered no to his questions, and then he said "Well, I guess you're not ready to control the crowd, are you?" Last time I ever heard from him, so I called the County – they had what they call a Task Force and those guys were just about to go out for a ride, so they went out there in a school bus and cleaned these guys out.

I: What was your most humorous experience?

N I thought that was pretty humorous. That was probably one of the more humorous things that happened – could have been dangerous, but it turned out to be kind of funny.

I: What would you like to tell others about your career?

N: Well, if you follow whatever you like to do, don't do, I mean, you know, don't just go up the totem pole because you could be a supervisor and you want to be a fisheries manager in the field, that's what you should be. Seems like the Service says if you do a good job here, you can't do that job over there, and that's not true. And we have very few supervisors that believe in that.

I: What were some of the changes you observed in the Service?

N: Well, I don't know if you observe – I think the changes have always been there, you just didn't all realize it at the time – you know, Personnel selections was one of my biggest gripes and I don't know if that's ever changed and I don't think it has – but I think more need to be aware of it.

I: How about the environment?

N: Well there was a lot of dedicated people in the field that were working, and there's a lot of dedicated people in the Area office and also the Regional office – but there's also a lot of them that are incompetent and what they do is promote them to a different job and give them rolls and responsibilities that they do a very poor job of.

I: What are your thoughts on the future?

N: Well, I think, you know, if you always go back one step and go ahead two –and I think the current trend for eco-system management is the way to go – that's the only way to go – we talked about the current administration, talked about partnerships, etc., etc., and that's the way we've got to go – and apparently some of you don't believe that and, but you know, it's the only way that we're going to survive because you can stretch the buck that way and you can make things go further. Also what you're doing is you have a better working environment with other people within the Agencies than you do with FWS – I don't care if they're Law Enforcement or Fisheries or Federal Aid or ES or whatever they are and also we're all working together and then we work across Program lines, Agency lines, conservation lines, maybe the Audubon group, or Ducks Unlimited, whatever it is – you know it doesn't always have to be animal oriented, it would be plant oriented too.

I: Where do you see the Service heading in the next decades?

N: That's a good question. I think a lot of that is sort of trendy. I think a lot of it is , uh, it seems like there's always a flavor of the day, a color of the month, whatever that is. But I would say that it seems to me that the position I left is probably the way the Service should be going because the deals with partnerships revolve around our State Agencies, Tribes – these are people who have land management responsibilities and you know, I don't care if it's a biologist, a game warden, or law enforcement, or whatever it is.

I: Do you have any photographs or documents to donate, share or copy?

N: Not me.

I: Who else do you think we should interview?

N: There are a number of people. I would say the wetland program is sort of like the bastard child of the FWS – a lot of people just thought that it was a matter of going out and protecting these wetlands by buying them and that's all and there's no management to them, but that's not true. But I would like to see us go back and interview some of the pioneers in the wetland program – oh, Grady Mann is one of them, Dick Nord is another one – Hal Doughty is another one –

I: Well, Rollin, thanks for your help – would you like to have a copy of the tape?

N: Sure.

I: O.K., thanks again.